

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SENT TO D.C.

10-17-07

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instruction. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: West Burton Place Historic District

other names/site number:

2. Location

street and number: 143-161 W. Burton Place

N/A not for publication

city, town: Chicago

N/A vicinity

state: Illinois

county: Cook County

zip code 60614-

3. State/Federal/Tribal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. [Signature] /SHP
Signature of certifying official/Title

10-17-07
Date

State or Federal agency or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain.) _____

West Burton Place Historic District
Name of Property

Cook County Illinois
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
17	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
17	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic

Historic Subfunctions
(Enter subcategories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic

Current Subfunctions
(Enter subcategories from instructions)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Walls Brick

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Art

Period of Significance

1880-1940

Significant Dates

1880
1930

Significant Person

(Complete if criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Edgar Miller

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

West Burton Place Historic District
Name of Property

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County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
- See continuation sheet for additional HABS/HAER documentation.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government (Repository Name:)
- University
- Other

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 3.00

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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Cook County Illinois
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Victoria Granacki and Tim Freye
organization: Granacki Historic Consultants
street & number: 1105 W. Chicago Avenue
city or town: Chicago

state: Illinois

date: 4/17/2007
telephone: (312) 421-1131
zip code: 60622-

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name:

street & number:

city or town:

state:

telephone:

zip code:

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Program Center, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington DC 20240; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1993 O - 350-416 QL 3

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**West Burton Place Historic District
Chicago, Cook County, IL**

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The West Burton Place Historic District encompasses one short residential block in the Old Town neighborhood of Chicago. The district is comprised of twelve principal structures on either side of Burton Place and five residential coach houses behind principal structures on the north side of the street, from LaSalle Street on the east to the alley behind Wells Street on the west. The earliest structures on the block date from the early 1880s, but the architectural significance of the street is found in the 1930s remodelings into artists' studios. Nineteenth-century dwellings and flat buildings were added to and completely reconfigured into multi-level studio spaces with handcrafted features by artists and craftsmen. Seven of the structures were transformed in this manner while five retain their nineteenth-century historic appearance, providing a context for understanding what the street looked like when they began. The time period for significance is 1880-1940.

CONTEXT AND SETTING

West Burton Place (known as Carl Street until 1936) is located in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood. Old Town is one of Chicago's oldest residential neighborhoods, located at the foot of Lincoln Park, a few blocks west of the lakefront, approximately two miles north of the Loop. Burton Place is a short, east/west street that runs for one block between Wells and LaSalle Streets just south of North Avenue and the Wells/North Avenue Commercial district. Starr's Subdivision, which comprises the whole street, is an ante-fire subdivision of Bronson's addition to Chicago, first recorded September 12, 1844. Starr's Subdivision was laid out with eleven 24-foot wide x 107-foot deep lots facing each other on either side of Burton from LaSalle Street to the end of T-shaped alleys that run behind them. The subdivision also consisted of five 25 x 100 foot lots oriented east/west along Wells Street on the north side of Burton and five on the south side of Burton. These lots back onto the same alleys. Since the original platting, there have been two street changes that affected the street. Lots 1 and 31, on the eastern edge of the subdivision were acquired for the widening of La Salle Street in the later

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1890s, and the western part of the street between Wells and the alleys was repaved as a pedestrian plaza in 19~~78~~, with the eastern portion of the street ending in a cul-de-sac.

THE WEST BURTON PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Burton Place is an east/west street on the Chicago orthogonal grid system. Once running from LaSalle Street on the east through to Wells Street on the west, it is now a short cul-de-sac street entered from LaSalle Street on the east with a turn-around at the west end where it meets the alley. On the south side there is a narrow, landscaped, tree-lined parkway between the sidewalk and the street. On the north side there is no parkway; the sidewalk is built up to the curb.

There are twelve principal residential structures, all three stories in height, and some with basements. Although all were originally constructed between 1877 and 1896, the exterior appearances of the façades today reflect a time period of construction ranging from 1881 to 1940. Within this period there are two distinct time periods of construction and design themes. Five structures retain their original nineteenth-century appearance from 1880-1896 as typical Chicago three-flats with Italianate, Queen Anne or classical features, while seven sport a completely remodeled appearance from 1924-1940 and are generally Art Deco, Art Moderne, or International in styling. In addition to these principal structures there are five coach houses in the rear of properties on the north side of the street that are separate residential units.

Most structures are basically rectilinear in plan and built close to, or especially with the remodeled structures, at the front and side property lines. Front façade materials include one graystone, one gray-painted brick, three with stone bases combined with brick, three with red face-brick and three with variegated common brick. All have flat roofs. There are long, brick walls along the front property line for both older and remodeled structures: two principal structures and one rear coach house behind one wall on the north side, and four principal structures behind walls on the south side of the street. Seven houses, five of those with the original facades, have a few steps up to traditional front entry porches. For two structures, both remodeled, the principal entry is a few steps below grade.

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There are seven principal residential structures on the south side of the street. This includes three from the nineteenth-century and four that were remodeled in the 1930s. All of these are considered contributing. From east to west, they are the following:

Theophil Studios, 143 W. Burton Place is a three-story, eleven-unit condominium building. Originally built in 1892 (permit date May 28, 1892) as a three-story flat building, there are two alteration permits on record, one for unspecified improvements in 1924, (permit date April 26, 1924, called "sundry") and the other for a "brick front addition and alterations" from 1940 (permit date August 20, 1940). The property today is a rectangular red brick and stone corner structure that fills the lot lines. Generally Art Moderne in style, the geometrically composed principal facade has a vertical stone panel with stacked circular windows beside a red brick panel with rectangular windows. The base and top of the building are also stone. The architect for the remodeling was Frank LaPasso.

145 W. Burton Place is a three-story, three unit condominium building. It was built in 1896 (permit date January 23, 1896) as a flat building with a stone base and yellow brick upper floors and retains its original historic Classical Revival character, although with some alterations to the cornice. The architect for the design was W. L. Klewer and an announcement for the construction of the building appeared in the Feb. 1, 1896 issue of the *Economist*.

147 W. Burton Place is a three-story single-family residence. Built in 1881 as a three-story dwelling (permit date May 10, 1881), the red brick structure retains its historic Italianate character with an elaborate cornice and decorative brackets. The original stairs leading to a raised entry were removed and replaced with a balcony and the main entrance was relocated to the ground floor.

151 W. Burton Place is a three-story, three-flat apartment building. A historic structure on this lot existed before 1866, and there is an 1887 permit (September 6, 1887) for a two-story barn and basement. Permits from 1932 (November 17, 1932) for repairs and alterations, and from 1935 (May 21, 1935) for a "front brick addition to two-flat" indicate when it was remodeled into the Art Moderne appearance it has today. A curved window

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bay with stacked, multi-light windows sets off an inset front entry. The common brick façade is accented with random imbedded stones and projecting brick headers.

The Carl Street Studios at 155 W. Burton Place is a three-story, seventeen-unit condominium building. Highly irregular in floor plan, it was built around an 1877 two-story structure (permit date June 5, 1877). Alteration permits include April 7, 1932, "remodel existing building," July 7, 1933, "one-story top addition", and January 3, 1939, "repair fire damage." The signature project of artists Sol Kogen and Edgar Miller, the building today is a meandering complex of structure, passageways, and courtyards, covering three lots. The façade is variegated common brick with window openings of differing size, shape, and placement. Design elements such as stone, ceramic tiles, and carved wood pieces are used throughout as architectural accents, incorporating elements of the Art Deco style. A brick fence/wall runs along the front property line, separating the building's entry and private open spaces from the public sidewalk.

159 W. Burton Place is a three-story, three-unit condominium. Built in 1891 as a flat building (permit date October 9, 1891), the stone and red brick structure has a rusticated stone base with inset front entry. It retains the Classical Revival historic character of a typical Chicago three-flat building despite the removal of its original cornice.

161 W. Burton Place is a three-story, four-unit apartment building. The original structure was an 1879 two-story, Italianate dwelling (permit date September 17, 1879). In 1940 a permit issued for "alterations for studio apartments" completely transformed the existing structure. Built up to the front lot line and extended in the rear, the three-story Art Moderne structure has a curved corner window bay with expansive glass block, and an inset front entry. The exterior is variegated common brick and window placement reflects interior functional requirements. The east side of this structure aligns with the alley behind Wells Street.

There are five principal residential structures on the north side of the street and five residential coach houses in the rear. This includes two from the nineteenth-century and three that were remodeled in the 1930s. All of these are considered contributing. From west to east, they are the following:

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160 W. Burton Place is a three-story, four-unit apartment building with a one-story single-family coach house in the rear. The original front building dates from before 1886 with a permit for a one-story addition in 1887 (June 14, 1887). Alteration permits for the entire property include an unspecified permit from 1924 (September 16, 1924), one for "brick storage" October 8, 1928, and one for "alterations" January 21, 1938. The building today has a stark, flat front façade with two long, vertical window stacks placed off-center. Decorative sculptural panels accent the ground floor and the principal entry is a few steps below grade along the side of the building. With its geometric simplicity, it could be identified as International Style. The rear coach house is one-story common brick and displays no distinctive stylistic exterior features. It is probably a residential remodeling of a three-car garage that replaced an original stable on the property sometime between 1886 and 1906.

158 W. Burton Place is a three-story, four-unit condominium with a three-story, single-family coach house in the rear. Although no original permit was found, the flat-fronted red brick building likely dates from the early 1880s and retains its nineteenth-century appearance with minor Italianate features. There is a 1938 permit (permit date October 3, 1938) for a "rear addition" by architect, Glicken and Glicken, which is likely the existing three-story coach house. A notation on the permit card in June 1940 states that the work was abandoned; this same notation is found on the 1950 Sanborn map. However the coach house exists today and its alley façade displays highly idiosyncratic windows imbedded in stucco panels. This remodeling was by Ron Dirsmith in 1966 in a similar artistic spirit to the earlier projects.

154-156 W. Burton Place is a residential cooperative that combines a three-story front building at 156 W. Burton with two, two-story rear coach houses, one directly behind 156 W. and one on the next lot at 154 W. The original front structure was probably built before 1886 but a series of alteration permits in the 1930s could date both the front and the rear structures. The first was in 1936 (permit date November 18, 1936) for "interior alterations." Others were in 1937 (permit date January 11, 1937) also for "interior alterations," in 1939 (permit date March 22, 1939) for a "new bay window replacing old," and also in 1939 (permit date July 20, 1939) for "interior alterations." While the bay window permit clearly refers to the front structure, the interior alteration permits may refer to several different structures. There is also a permit listed for the 154 address in

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1933 for "interior and exterior alterations." Today the property consists of a three-story front building with a patched brick façade obviously reflecting International Style changes combined with original historic elements. The alley façades of the coach houses reveal glass block windows reflective of the 1930s development on the street behind 156, while that at 154 has no distinctive exterior characteristics. The stucco façade of 154 is partially visible from Burton Place through the courtyard between 152 and 156.

152 W. Burton Place is a three-story, four-unit apartment building. The original structure was built before 1886 but the appearance today reflects its 1930s alterations. Two permits exist, one from 1936 (September 10) for "alterations," and the other from 1937 (June 4) for "interior alterations." The massing of the exterior façade was retained, but its overall appearance was simplified. The porch was removed and a stacked glass block sidelight added to the entry, windows in the second floor bay were bricked in, and an Art Deco style brick cornice was added. The entire façade also appears to have been refaced in new brick. There is a small rear structure that is probably a separate coach house.

150 W. Burton Place is a three-story, three-unit condominium building. Built in 1889 (permit date August 19, 1889) this three-flat appears to have replaced an earlier structure on the same lot. Today it retains its classic nineteenth-century rusticated graystone appearance except for a large, boxed-in cornice.

OVERALL INTEGRITY

Both sets of structures, within the two time periods of construction, 1880-1896 and 1924-1940, retain excellent historic integrity. Most notably, the buildings that were remodeled in the 1930s retain an almost pristine appearance from those historic alterations. The nineteenth-century structures have had some loss of original fabric, most noticeably the removal of cornices and presence of non-historic replacement windows. Nonetheless, the street retains an old-fashioned, nineteenth-century residential collection set against a 1930s modern mix of quixotic, artist-made structures.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The West Burton Place Historic District is architecturally significant as the backdrop against which artists and craftspeople of the Depression era transformed what were then deteriorating nineteenth-century rooming houses into unique studio environments. Led by artist/entrepreneur Sol Kogen and master designer Edgar Miller who began with the Carl Street Studios, other artists got involved on the street, and Burton Place became a mecca for artistic innovation in the built environment. This spirit of retrieving and recreating urban dwellings spread throughout the Old Town community, which became the forerunner to the modern day back-to-the-city preservation and rehabilitation movement in Chicago. As a result of their pioneering artistic expression, the Old Town community acquired a reputation for the arts that endures today.

HISTORY OF BURTON PLACE AND OLD TOWN

Old Town was first settled in the 1840s and 1850s by German farmers and semi-skilled workers who moved north from overcrowded St. Joseph's parish at Chicago and Wabash. Known then as North Town, the area soon filled with modest frame cottages with basements for coal and vegetables and rear outbuildings for keeping small livestock. Although the Chicago Fire in 1871 completely wiped out this part of the city, it was quickly rebuilt first with hastily constructed fire shanties, and then, within a few years, with two- and three-story brick dwellings and flat buildings in popular styles such as Italianate and Queen Anne. Lining La Salle Street on the eastern edge of the neighborhood, large mansions and brick-and stone-faced townhouses began to appear as early as 1872. As the 1880s approached, the multi-family flat buildings and rowhouses so typical of urban housing at the time filled the streets behind them for an expanding middle-class. A city ordinance passed in 1874 outlawing frame construction within the city limits further dictated this type of construction.

Burton Place reflects this initial post-fire development, and also displays a succession of later development and population changes. As in most of Old Town, the critical need for

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housing was satisfied within weeks of the fire by intrepid residents who quickly erected small, frame cottages. Some of these were intentionally built at the rear of the lots in anticipation of building more substantial masonry structures in the future. The 1886 Robinson's Atlas shows eight lots improved with principal structures on the north side, and six principal structures on the south side, one of these on a double lot. There were three rear structures on the north side and four on the south side of the street. A study of their size, materials, and lot placement suggests that some of these were likely fire cottages. Although there are several buildings on the street that date from this pre-1886 period of growth, only two retain their historic appearance from that time – 147 and 158 W. Burton, built in 1881 and c. 1880, respectively.

The first wave of development pressure in the district began within just twenty years of this early construction. In the 1890s and early 1900s some smaller homes were replaced with larger, more substantial brick single-family dwellings and flat buildings. Most notably, two smaller homes on the north side of Burton near LaSalle Street were demolished and combined with the corner lot for the construction of the large, six-story, red brick, multiple flat building at 1500 N. LaSalle Street. The other two small houses to the west were demolished and the lots redeveloped with a three-story graystone (150) and a two-story brick dwelling (152). All three of these structures remain standing today. During this same 20-year time period (1886-1906), Sanborn maps show three secondary structures were added to the rear of the properties on the north side, one existing structure was noted as a rear dwelling, and another rear structure had been demolished.

On the south side of the street, development pressures were also at work. The existing structure at 159 was replaced with a larger, three-story brick flat building. On the two lots at 143 and 145 which had only small, rear structures in 1886, substantial, three-story masonry flat buildings were constructed. Rear structures were added behind 151 and 147, and a rear addition was built onto 161.

Although new construction had ceased by the end of the first decade of the twentieth-century, population change did not. The second wave of development pressure affected the occupancy of structures rather than the physical structures themselves. Between the 1900 and 1920 census, a dramatic shift in tenancy was underway on the street as

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property owners moved elsewhere and renters took on lodgers within their own households, or converted entire flats into boarding houses. The 1920 census counts at least 25 lodgers on the street, with some in almost every building. Households also included extended family such as adult married children and their spouses, elderly parents, sisters-in-law, and cousins. With more people squeezing into the same amount of housing space, dwelling units became overcrowded, taking a toll on maintenance and repair.

At the same time, the proximity of Old Town to "Tower Town" -- what was then Chicago's Bohemian neighborhood -- attracted fringe cabarets, lounges and clubs to the Wells Street strip. Tower Town, roughly surrounding the old Water Tower at Chicago and Michigan avenues, had been the city's artists' community from the later nineteenth-century into the first decades of the twentieth-century. Bug House Square in Washington Park attracted all kinds of amateur orators, with a reputation for speeches by Communist revolutionaries and extremists, while the Dill Pickle Club was the place for drinking, smoking, and discussion of topics too risqué for more polite surroundings. But after World War I, Tower Town's proximity to the Loop and its inexpensive properties made it attractive to developers. Less than a mile northwest, Old Town became the next artists' refuge.

Thus the stage was set for a third wave of development led by fledgling real estate entrepreneur/artists, Sol Kogen and Edgar Miller at the Carl Street Studios, 151 W. Burton Place (called Carl Street before 1936). Begun in 1927, this was their first remodeling project, and initiated the conversion of older, Victorian-era flats into "modern" artists studios. Although once complete the studios were priced out of range for struggling artists, several well-established artists always lived in the complex. Its primary draw, however, was amongst businessmen and others seeking to live in unusual artistic surroundings, near the nightlife of the Near North side, with the taste of an exotic and "Bohemian" lifestyle. Miller once described the studio complex as the process of taking "an obsolete structure and setting out to make it into something new, fascinating, and living."¹

¹ Sheldon Mix, "Burton Place the Handmade Street" *Chicago Magazine*, Spring 1966, p 37.

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Carl Street became home to artists, writers, and those looking for the new, interesting, and unconventional place to live. Although the 1930s were a bleak economic time for many, the arts community was supported by the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which existed from 1935-1943. With Chicago headquarters at 433 E. Erie, the program employed about 300 artists who were given a regular salary and placed on call to design and execute paintings, murals, and sculpture for public institutions.² This program supported some of the artists who lived on Carl Street in its early years as an arts community, including Gustaf Dahlstrom, Edgar Britton, and in 1942, Edward Millman, Dan Leavitt, Edgar Burton, John Norton, Taylor Poore, Stewart Rae, and Boris Anisfeld.

The living spirit of the studios permeated the entire block and spread to surrounding properties so that today, seven of the twelve principal structures are renovated in a manner inspired by Edgar Miller's original design concepts. As a result of their direct efforts, four houses on the south side of the street were dramatically and irreversibly transformed. In addition to the centerpiece Carl Street Studios, a complex of seventeen studios on three lots wrapped around winding interior courtyards, there are the two flat buildings at 151 and 161 whose curved glass block window bays mirror each other, and the Theophil Studios, which dramatically marks the southwest corner of LaSalle as the entrance to the street. On the north side of the street three principal structures were altered: 160, 156 and 152. Of these, only the first was completely transformed; the others retain some vestiges of their original historic form. In addition, several rear structures on the north side were remodeled into residences. Kogen and Miller created another seminal Old Town artists studio project at 1734 N. Wells also in the late 1920s. Their work, and that of others who were similarly inspired, led to the revitalization of the entire Old Town community in the 1940s.

ARTISTS STUDIOS AS A BUILDING TYPE

As a building type the artist studio complex has a short but distinguished history. Formally designed artists studios, defined as spaces created specifically for artists to live and work, began in the mid-nineteenth-century in the United States with the

² Barbara Bernstein, "Federal Art: Not gone, Just Forgotten." *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 1973.

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construction of the Tenth Street Studios in New York City by master architect, Richard Morris Hunt. Hunt's Tenth Street prototype was the first of its kind in Europe or the United States.³ He had experience designing private studios for artists, but never had anyone initiated the idea of designing a studio complex for lease to the artists of the city. In his previous studio designs, Hunt developed a formula for this building type that would spread to every city with even a modest interest in cultural development. Common features included large, two-story, north-facing windows to take advantage of the even daylight that was popular with artists, dressing rooms for models, a small parlor, public exhibition space for tenants, and recessed interior balconies that overlooked large, two-story open spaces. Studio complexes became a familiar building type through the rest of the nineteenth-century and the early twentieth-century.

During the 1890s, Chicago kept a moderate pace with New York City in the development of artists' studios. Chicago's philanthropic efforts resulted in two outstanding examples of studio buildings. Both from the late nineteenth-century, Tree Studios, located on the 600 block of North State Street, bounded by Ohio and Ontario Streets, and the Fine Arts Building, located at 410 South Michigan Avenue, provided much needed space to local artists and also encouraged local interest in the unique lifestyle of colorful bohemian living.

Built in 1894, Tree Studios was always in great demand by nearby Tower Town residents. Local judge and philanthropist Lambert Tree and his wife, Anna Magie, were so impressed with the artists' studios they saw in New York, that Lambert commissioned the New York Parfitt Brothers to design a complex for the promotion of the arts in Chicago. The Chicago architectural firm Bauer and Hill executed the actual construction of the Queen Anne style building in buff Roman brick and decorative cast and pressed metal. The studios were moderately priced, being subsidized by the first floor retail spaces, and as such, they were continuously occupied, rarely posting a vacancy. The waiting list for space prompted the Tree Estate to commission two annexes in 1912 and 1913 located on Ontario and Ohio Streets. The plans of the annexes are reminiscent of the excellent work found at the Tenth Street Studios by Hunt. "The nearly five dozen studios get a north light... Duplex apartments have windows ten feet square as well as

³ Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio Building*. The Parish Art Museum, Southampton, New York, 1997, 17.

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interior balconies, brick fireplaces, and 25-foot ceilings.”⁴ The complex encouraged collaboration and community by providing glass cases in the hallways to encourage resident artists to exhibit their work and connecting doors between studios.

The Tree Studios were originally designed solely as workspaces, but even with their moderate rents, most artists could not afford to pay for separate living and working spaces. Sculptor John Brien who lived and worked at Tree Studios from 1925 to 1975 stated, “..most of us couldn’t afford to pay rent on both a place to work and a place to sleep.. Little by little we started sneaking in hot plates, iceboxes, and cots, and began living in the studios. The management eventually got wise to us and decided to fix up our studios with all the comforts of home.”⁵

The Fine Arts Building at 410 South Michigan Avenue, formerly the Studebaker Building, was remodeled in 1898 into studios for every type of artist. Painters, poets, sculptors, musicians, actors, illustrators, and dancers all flocked to the spaces once they opened, including early tenants like the prominent sculptor, Lorado Taft, illustrator John T. McCutcheon, and several women’s organizations. Instead of selling the property after their family carriage factory was relocated, the Studebaker brothers developed the project with Charles Curtiss, son of a former Chicago Mayor. They rehired the original architect, Solon S. Beman, to add floors and renovate the building into a center for the arts. While in the design phase, Beman consulted with artists to address their needs in the building.⁶ The final product was a Romanesque high-rise with ten floors of office and studio space for those in the arts or arts-related businesses. The main floor hosted a theater and a music hall that gave ample space for performing arts tenants.

The building opened with a large amount of fanfare. The tenth floor studios were the most sought after for their large windows and skylights. Artists tended to cluster together by discipline – musicians on one floor, smiths and decorators on another. In December 1910, the Artists’ Guild was formed among the tenants and a retail store opened on the sixth floor for the sale of works from the residing artists in “every line of fine, applied, and

⁴ Marcia Slater Johnston, “Artful Living in the Dear Old Tree Studios,” *Daily News Panorama*, May 12, 1976.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “The Book of the Fine Arts Building” Printed for the Building, 1908, p28.

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kindred arts.”⁷ The Artists’ Guild membership continued to grow and in 1916 evolved into the Arts Club of Chicago.⁸

Both the Tree Studios and the Fine Arts Building adhere to the traditional layout for artists’ studios as outlined by Hunt, and their picturesque exterior styles are a reflection of the academic art world at that time. While the Fine Arts Building served as an anchor near the School of the Art Institute, the Tree Studios became the center of the established Tower Town enclave on the north side of the city.

However, with the radical changes in art expression in the early years of the twentieth-century, artists, first in Europe and then in the United States, began looking for a new lifestyle. After World War I, changing social conditions in the United States and the allure of being connected to the volatile “non-academic” art world carried some responsibility for the increased appeal of artists’ studios as living spaces.

With a post-World War I housing shortage, soaring property values during the 1920s housing boom, and the eventual 1929 stock market crash, renovation became the pragmatic choice rather than investing in new construction for artists. Most of the artists’ studios built between the World Wars were renovations of existing nineteenth-century row houses, apartment buildings, and former mansions. The renovations addressed three objectives: a quick solution to addressing the severe housing shortage, and the modernization of antiquated utilities and room layouts that had made the spaces difficult to rent. But perhaps even more importantly, by giving old-fashioned Victorian structures the latest fashion update, renovators provided a tangible break with the past for artists and other young people seeking to distance themselves from their parents’ immigrant past.

Architectural Record began a series of articles in 1923 addressing new trends and solutions in apartment building design. The goal was to identify the effects of World War I on American apartment living. The artist studio layout had moved into mainstream culture and a number of buildings that were renovated or designed to comfortably house a working artist were specifically marketed to a wider audience. *Architectural Record*

⁷ Ibid, p 26.

⁸ Sharon S. Darling, “Arts and Crafts Shops in the Fine Arts Building” *Chicago History*, 85.

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noted that studio-type dwellings had “long been recognized and proven by...artists in Greenwich Village, around Washington Square, on Beacon Hill, or in the quaint little side streets and places.” It further stated that the formality of nineteenth-century residences had passed and “attempts made along the line of altering old dwellings into apartments... for middle class tenants...are, for the moment, the only available means of quickly and inexpensively increasing the housing capacity of our more crowded cities.”⁹

Although traditional and patriotic styles had prevailed throughout the 1920s in new construction, the European trend toward simple massing and clean forms began to take hold in the United States. Modernization of existing late nineteenth-century homes became common at the end of the decade, and particularly with limited capital after the stock market crash.¹⁰ The two most frequent and significant changes that usually happened to the traditional graystone or brownstone were the removal of the front stairs and the removal of excess ornament, particularly the cornice. Removal of the front stairs permitted the façade to be pulled forward towards the street, eliminating the front yard and setback. Exteriors were often given a coat of stucco to achieve a cleaner and more streamlined look. *Architectural Record* describes it as an effort “to modernize these old facades by some simple means – either by merely sloughing off most of the misdirected ‘ornament’ with which the original front has so long been overburdened, or by resurfacing with plaster or brick veneer to endeavor at once to simplify and improve its appearance so that it will appeal to a new class of occupants without delay.”¹¹

Several well-documented projects in New York, as well as the work undertaken on Burton Place in Chicago illustrate this renovation spirit. The overall approach was that the aging housing stock was still functional but its appearance was passé. New York’s Turtle Bay Gardens, redesigned by Edward C. Dean and William Lawrence Bottomley in 1920, consisted of twenty row houses along 48th and 49th Streets between Second and Third Avenues. The structures were significantly changed on the interior to provide

⁹ Frank Choteau Brown, “Tendencies in Apartment House Design. Part i. Examples of Remodeling” *Architectural Record* 50, June 1921, p489-494.

¹⁰ Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, Thomas Mellins, “At Home in Manhattan” *New York 1930 Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars*, Rizzoli International Publications, New York, 1987, p377.

¹¹ Frank Chocteau Brown, *ibid.*

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modern amenities. Stucco was applied to the facades and detailed with restrained period elements. The rear yards were combined to create one large enclosed retreat. Those houses opening towards the interior garden were painted in subtle, pastel colors.¹² Turtle Bay Gardens inspired other homeowners along the street to renovate their brownstones in a similar manner.

Another New York project was the redesign of the Greenwich Village complex called Twin Peaks, redesigned by artist Clifford Reed Daily in 1925. Daily remodeled a frame house into a half-timbered and stucco structure using reclaimed material and architectural fragments. His expressed motive was to provide "a new building that would retain the individuality and charm of the Villages' old dwellings."¹³

The renovations that were begun on Chicago's Carl Street in the late 1920s by Sol Kogen and Edgar Miller illustrate a similar renovation spirit. In the case of most Carl Street renovations, the changes were extreme, completely transforming late nineteenth-century structures into modern styles with simple, artist-applied ornament. Additions were built in front of the old homes, right up to the sidewalks, creating new public facades. Interiors rearranged spaces into large, open, two-story volumes. At the same time, their frequent collaborator, Andrew Rebori, working in his firm, Rebori, Wentworth, Dewey & McCormick, designed the 40-50 West Schiller Cooperative Apartments using an artist studio aesthetic,¹⁴ with two-story-high living rooms and bedroom mezzanines.

SOL KOGEN AND EDGAR MILLER

In 1927, ambitious entrepreneur Sol Kogen and artist Edgar Miller set out to transform the declining Victorian-era Old Town Street into an environment of creative living spaces modeled loosely on Parisian artist studios. In so doing, they birthed Chicago's own version of Montmartre. Miller and Kogen met in 1917 while attending The School of the Art Institute. They were both unhappy with the school for different reasons, but they aligned themselves with a group of students who were protesting the curriculum and

¹² Robert A. M Stern, et al. *ibid.* p 428-429.

¹³ Stern, p 382.

¹⁴ Terry Tatum. "Fisher Studio Houses Preliminary Staff Summary of Information" Commission on Chicago Landmarks, City of Chicago, 1991, reprinted 1996, p15.

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called themselves "The Independents," after the Society of Independent Artists that exhibited in New York for the first time that year.

Edgar Miller was born in Eagle Rock (later named Idaho Falls) Idaho in 1899. The second of five children, Edgar was first employed in a creative field at the young age of eleven when he was engaged to do watercolor renderings of a proposed high school for a local architecture firm, Solderland & McGrew. After high school Miller came to Chicago to attend The School of the Art Institute, which he soon grew to hate. He left the school and continued his study under the direction of Enella Benedict at Jane Addams Hull House where instruction and studio space were free of charge.

Miller's artistic career began to blossom in Chicago as he worked in advertising and the decorative arts. His ads for Marshall Field & Company's *Fashions of the Hour* magazine beginning in the 1920s contributed to the retailer's widely identifiable image. The work tapped into the latest trends in popular culture and advertising. An essay he wrote for the magazine in 1925 entitled "The Prophetic City" regarding the Parisian International Exposition of the Decorative Arts summed up his optimism towards a new modernity in the arts and architecture. He wrote that "the old houses are going and in their place cheeky skyscrapers leap at the sky; the old dislike of the straight line, the tendency to soften the edges, forgotten."¹⁵

In 1921 Miller accepted a job as an instructor in the applied arts program at The School of the Art Institute where he taught classes in Art History and the Decorative Arts until 1927. Concurrently, in 1923 he began an apprenticeship with well-regarded sculptor, Alphonse Iannelli in his Park Ridge studio. Some of the projects Miller worked on included commissions for Barry Byrne's Church of Christ the King in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1925, and for The Immaculata High School at Irving Park and Marine Drive in Chicago. Through these activities, Miller made contacts with some of the most prominent artists and architects of the period including muralist John Norton and architect Andrew Rebori with whom he collaborated on the Fisher Studios. He often hosted exhibitions in his apartment on West Pearson Street that helped celebrate local artists and exposed him to the work of some of the most challenging artists of the time. Amongst them were Chicago sculptor John Storrs, *Chicago Tribune* cartoonist Lyonel Feininger, and German

¹⁵ The Prophetic City, *Marshall Field's Fashions of the Hour*, Exposition Number, 1925.

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architect Erich Mendelsohn. He was a board member of the No-Jury Society of Artists whose mission was to allow anyone serious enough to exhibit their artwork without fear of the rejecting eye of the Art Institute's conservative sentiments.¹⁶ The group later merged with the Arts Club of Chicago.

Architects were aware of Miller's social and artistic diversity and he began to receive commissions in the decorative arts. His first stained glass commission was the result of his entry in the 23rd Exhibition of Modern Decorative Arts, and his winning the Frank G. Logan Prize for a small window adorned with geometric patterns and birds. Exhibition chairman, Howard Van Doren Shaw presented the prize and then hired Miller to design the stained glass windows for the eighth floor executive offices of the R. R. Donnelley Building at 350 Cermak Road. Miller's work in stained glass is innovative in design, subject matter, construction, and technique.

Edgar Miller received a number of commissions from local architects in the 1920s. From the architectural firm of Holabird and Root these included the sculpture on the Technological Building at Northwestern University in Evanston (1929), the North Dakota State Capitol sculpture (1933-1934), windows for the executive offices at the Palmolive Building and for Diana Court in the Michigan Square Building (1929), the last two destroyed. He also designed cut lead grillage for the entrance lobby at the Trustees System Service Building by architects Theilbar and Fugard (1929). In 1927 he began his professional association with Sol Kogen designing and crafting the Carl Street Studios and at another Kogen-initiated artists' studio project at 1734 N. Wells, which was being built concurrently. Here Miller completed stained glass, decorative wrought iron, carving, and the signature red front door, returning to work for subsequent owners well into the 1980s. After collaborating with Andrew Rebori at the Street of Paris concession at the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair, those two worked together on the Fisher Studios at 1209 N. State Street (1936). It is generally accepted that Miller designed the primary street façade of the Fisher Studios and that Rebori focused on the plan. The broad, sweeping curve of the glass block was a Rebori refinement influenced by Miller's initial studio designs.

¹⁶ Stefan Germer. *The Old Guard and the Avant-Guard: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*. Edited by Sue Ann Prince, University of Chicago Press, 1990, p.83

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Edgar Miller lived at the Carl Street Studios for a few years during the early 1930s but moved to the Normandy House at 800 N. Michigan after he and Sol Kogen parted ways in 1936. Miller later lived at 5754 Sheridan Road throughout the 1950s with his wife, Dale Holcomb and his two sons. The family adorned their Craftsman-style bungalow with art of all kinds. In the mid-1960s, he and his family moved to Clearwater Florida where Miller intended to redesign an old motel into a resort. After his wife died he moved to San Francisco for a short time. In the late 1980s, Miller returned to Chicago to continue work at the Wells Street Studios that he had begun so many years earlier. He died in Chicago in 1993.

Sol Kogen was born in Chicago in 1900 to Russian Jewish parents who had immigrated to the city in 1890. Sol's father was a successful merchant who owned a women's accessory shop in the Maxwell Street area. As a child and young man Kogen took art classes with Jane Addams and Enella Benedict at Hull House. Benedict encouraged Kogen to attend the Art Institute. While there he frequently acted out in protest of a restrictive administration that "took too much freedom out of art."¹⁷ Kogen eventually left with a few other students before he was expelled and joined Miller to continue his studies at Hull House. Within a few years, Kogen was forced to postpone his artistic training for the family yard goods business located at Roosevelt and Halsted, since his father was planning his retirement. Kogen spent the next six years very successfully expanding the business, until at the age of 25 he sold his share and moved to Paris to study art. It was in Paris that the inspiration for Burton Place took hold of Kogen. Living on the Left Bank he was very impressed with the creative energy of the city, especially the artists studios that landlords were building to take advantage of the cultural activity in the city. When Kogen returned to Chicago he was determined to bring some of that creative vision and energy to his native city.

From his success in the family business, Sol had the financial resources to purchase an old flat building at 155 Carl Street in 1927. About the same time, Kogen was engaged to create nine artists' studios from an existing structure at 1734 N. Wells Street, a few blocks away. About the same time, Kogen was also engaged to create nine artists' studios from an existing structure at 1734 N. Wells Street, a few blocks away. He sought out his Art Institute classmate, Edgar Miller, and the two formed a partnership that was,

¹⁷ Edith Roberts, "There's no place like Burton Place" *Chicago Magazine*, March 1956.

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according to Miller, more akin to a "gentleman's agreement." Kogen needed Miller to design and construct the studios, and Miller got a place to live and a creative outlet in a steady stream of work, although unpaid. As Miller noted to Edith Roberts in an article for *Chicago Magazine*, Sol "got the material and I determined how to use it. Practically all of the material was reclaimed, because when a building was demolished, the good wood, tile, and marble used to be saved. So here was second-hand material that didn't cost much, but was distinguished as hell. To use it you just had to have taste and a sense of space."¹⁸ Much of the salvaged material was scavenged from other construction sites or purchased from junk dealers on Maxwell Street. It was all reworked in a contemporary vocabulary. Old copper bathtubs were hammered into decorative doors, marble restroom partitions were laid horizontally for a living room floor. Broken slate roofing tiles jut out of the mortar joints of decorative brickwork. Victorian tile fireplace surrounds were reconfigured into window sills, steps, or the maze of walkways.

Kogen slowed down on his remodeling work in 1940 to focus on his health as he was having heart problems. He spent five years in Arizona and Mexico painting. He married his second wife, Florence in 1947 and returned to W. Burton Place where he lived at 155 until his death in 1957.

OTHER ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS

A major contributor to the work of Kogen and Miller at the Carl Street Studios was Jesus Torres, who had emigrated from Mexico to Chicago in 1924. Born in Silao Mexico in 1898, Jesus Torres first came to the United States at the age of nineteen. Working as an itinerant field hand, Torres made his way to southern rice and cotton fields and later to a sugar beet factory in Minnesota, coming finally to Chicago. He settled along Clark Street and began work as a laborer in the Union Stockyards. While taking an English class at Hull House, Torres met artist Morris Topchevsky. According to an article on Torres in the November 16, 1947 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, "One day Topchevsky gave a mound of clay to the little Mexican, Torres, supposing it would be molded into some awkward piece, perhaps a bowl. But the monosyllabic Jesus sculptured a head. In this mode of expression the Mexican was not inarticulate. His hands had given voice to an

¹⁸ Edith Roberts, "There's no Place Like Burton Place" *Chicago Magazine* March 1956, p44.

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artist's mind. Even before this head of clay was baked in the kiln it was sold to a member of Hull House faculty. Torres had found his highway to the future."¹⁹

Torres began work as an artisan, creating woodcarvings, tile mosaics, and painted murals inspired by the Aztec culture of his home country for a number of interiors in Chicago and other cities. He also acted as Edgar Miller's apprentice during the renovation of 155 Burton Place and took over as Kogen's full time artist after Miller left in 1936. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Torres began working with copper and brass, and continued to make elaborately carved wood pieces, paint murals, and design interiors. Torres died in 1948.²⁰

At the Carl Street complex he was responsible for the carved doors, the rear exterior staircase, and the copper crowns and trim on the rear addition. Torres took over all the carving after Miller left about 1936. He completed additional work on other Kogen-directed projects like the Wells Street Studios at 1734 N. Wells, 160 W. Burton Place, and 154 W. Schiller Street. Evidence of his work can be found on other homes in the Old Town neighborhood.

With the majority of Kogen and Miller's efforts underway during the Great Depression of the 1930s, there were always workers to assist. One was Edgar's own brother, Frank Miller, who had intended to move to San Francisco but stayed in Chicago to work on many of Edgar's projects. Frank was Edgar Miller's assistant on a number of his larger commissions outside the studios, but also filled in wherever he was needed at Carl Street. He helped in many trades including plumbing, steam fitting, bricklaying, carpentry, and painting.

Since neither Kogen nor Miller had sufficient knowledge of structural principles of architecture, they often relied on Miller's friend Andrew Rebori as a consulting architect. Andrew Nicholas Rebori was born on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1886 to Italian-born parents. Because his father died when he was only three, Rebori was forced

¹⁹ "Aztecs' Glory Finds Rebirth in Torres' Art," *Chicago Tribune*, November 16, 1947, page SW5

²⁰ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 14, 1948, p. C5]

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to work from a young age. He was hired as a draftsman by several architects during high school and then received a scholarship to Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1905. In 1908 he received the Lowell Traveling Fellowship, which enabled him to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the American Academy in Rome. He came to Chicago in 1911 to teach at Armour Institute of Technology. He was a junior partner to Jarvis Hunt from 1914 through the end of World War I. In the early 1920s he formed his own architectural firm, Rebori, Wentworth, Dewey & McCormick, where he was the principal design partner catering to wealthy Chicagoans. After the 1925 Paris exposition, his design sensibility began to reflect what came to be known as the Art Moderne style. His firm was dissolved in 1930, but he continued to work on small jobs in a modern design idiom. He may also have been more available during this time to advise Miller in his architectural projects although his direct involvement has not been substantiated. Rebori was quoted in a 1966 *Chicago Magazine* article saying: "yes, I was the consulting architect, but only when I was consulted – which was damned little."²¹ Some of Rebori's best work is from the 1930s including the Madonna Della Strada Chapel at Loyola University and the Fisher Apartment Building. Rebori retired in 1961 and died May 31, 1966.²²

THE CARL STREET STUDIOS

The first project of Kogen and Miller was the Carl Street Studios, an 1877 two-story masonry dwelling that eventually expanded into an idiosyncratic complex of seventeen duplex artists' studio apartments surrounding two courtyards. The pair began working on the existing residence, in the center of three lots, which they split up into six duplex units. A four-story addition was built up to the front property line on the adjacent lot to the east, and then, in the late 1930s, another L-shaped structure that wraps around the southwest corner of the main structure. An existing two-flat in the rear of the eastern lot was also incorporated into the highly-irregularly shaped structure. Fifteen of the apartments open onto an inner courtyard, while the two remaining units along the west open onto their own private open space area.

²¹ Sheldon A. Mix. "The Handmade Street" *Chicago Magazine*, Spring 1966

²² Tatum, Frank L. Fisher, Jr. Apartments. P. 6

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The studio building, in a loosely modern vocabulary, expresses an imposing massing and proportion along the street elevation. Two-story stained glass windows further emphasize its verticality. Each window is unique in shape and materials, displaying textured, clear, translucent, colored antique, and stained glass sections. Most of the exterior is faced with reclaimed common brick, accented with limestone flags and marble slabs. The flat roof is capped off by a geometric cornice of several courses of common brick set at an angle, producing a sawtooth crenellation. The flat wall surfaces are punctuated with rough, unfinished limestone and non-matching bricks that twist from a predictable course, as well as jagged pieces of recycled slate that jut out from the mortar joints in random patterns.

The pavement along the six-foot tall common brick privacy wall is configured in a wild geometric patchwork of nineteenth-century tiles and marble restroom partitions. The tile runs under the security gate that marks the entrance into the inner courtyards. Decorative cast concrete columns featuring animals, humans and exotic motifs of Edgar Miller's design are dated 1930 and flank the gate. An inset panel identifies the complex as the "Original Carl Street Studios, Erected 1927. Sol Kogen."

Being built up to the front lot line, the easternmost section of the complex has the most prominent presence on the street. This section contains Units 7, 8, and 9, the last three studios designed by Edgar Miller. It features several large, two-story openings glazed with decorative stained glass in geometric chevron patterns, animal figures, and more traditional naturalistic motifs. Wild creatures carved into the woodwork gaze down over the sidewalk from a second story bay with multi-pane casement windows and topped with a sloping ribbed copper roof. Carved brackets representing weasels surrounded by geometric ornament support the bay, and its base is lined with terra-cotta relief sculptures of animal and human figures.

There are three staggered setbacks moving west down the street. The first sets behind a privacy wall that runs the entire length of the street elevation. This setback contains two vertical two-story stained glass windows in a geometric chevron pattern, a common Edgar Miller motif. A walkout concrete terrace slices back into the next two setbacks and is finished with a sleek railing of horizontal metal bands that are expressive of the Art Moderne style. The second setback begins at the edge of the west elevation, which is

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the longest and most detailed. The windows are primarily multi-pane steel casements set with stained glass elements. From the ground level and rising vertically, narrow ribbon windows, some with glass block, others with clear or colored glazing in stylized geometric and organic motifs, provide light to an enclosed stairway. A double-stepped arched opening in the exterior wall at ground level leads to Unit 2, and another to Unit 1. Almost directly above is a half-timbered bay hung on an upper floor and set with casement windows that are glazed with a mix of colored and translucent glass. At the smallest and furthest setback from the street at the rear of the property there is an additional stepped-arch doorway framing the carved door to Unit 4.

Another fanciful world of arts and crafts decoration lies within the east courtyard, accessed through an open-air covered passageway with a textured fresco ceiling. Here remains the only view of the original 1877 structure, with an original two-story bay window, limestone stringcourse, brackets, rusticated limestone, and pressed metal dentils. Entrances to units are placed serendipitously around the courtyard. Several in the rear are reached by an exterior stairway with hand-carved railings, spindles, and supports. Two other units are accessed through a hidden external stairway along the northeast corner of the courtyard. There is also a Miller fresco with deep red-orange painted panels outlined in violet in which he scratched a Garden of Eden featuring a wide-eyed Eve surrounded by lions, elk, and other beasts.

A large, cantilevered, half-timbered structure projects from the second floor at the rear of the courtyard. Here is a carved exterior staircase by Jesus Torres as well as carved front doors to each unit. Some doors have decorative, hammered copper salvaged from old bathtubs. Sculpture and mosaic work by Miller, was probably relocated here by Kogen after Miller left the Carl Street Studios in 1936.

On the interior, continuing a long tradition of artists' studio design, the main studio space or living area fills a two-story height. Accessory rooms are planned around this main space and are arranged with an open feel, having curved and sloping plaster walls. In these 1930s curves, the rooms and ceiling heights are at varying levels to create a lively flow. Living space is maximized with handcrafted built-in bookshelves, cabinetry, desks, and seating. Each unit has at least one fireplace with a decorative tile surround and

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parquet floors rimmed with bands of tile or stone. The bathrooms are covered in recycled tile and marble similar to that on the sidewalk and exterior common areas.

Shared outdoor spaces enlivened with rich artistic elements encouraged the interaction between members of the community and could spur creativity. But in a pragmatic sense, it also allowed more rentable space and more units to be built on the site without compromising overall amenities. Each unit opens onto one of the private courtyards, creating an extension of living space into shared patios and gardens. According to Frank Miller, "the apartments became an instant success owing to their unusual and beautiful design. There was always a waiting list, even though the rent was much higher than the ordinary apartment."²³

The Carl Street Studios is an apartment complex that is modern in plan and overall appearance, yet displaying warmth in the richness of materials and intricacy of design motifs. The presentation of identifiable and symbolic subject matter expressed in a wide variety of traditional materials makes the studios appealing to a broad audience while still attractive to those with more modern, avant-garde architectural taste. Miller was not a fan of abstract art, but rather preferred "folk art – art intimately related to people in ordinary life, not the art they look at in a museum."²⁴ This explains Miller's love for history, nature, and biblical themes in his work as he attempts to work with a visual language or symbolism that communicates a deep universal message. A 1930 *Chicago Daily News* article described Miller as the "Master of Mediums" stating, "It is hard to believe that any other creative artist in Chicago can work in so many fields with so much surety and so much success."²⁵

Kogen and Miller developed another complex of artists' studios at about the same time located a few blocks away at 1734 N. Wells Street. The pair was hired by Major Max Woldenberg to renovate another later nineteenth-century residence into duplex studios. It is believed that Edgar and Frank Miller, together with Jesus Torres executed most of the work with Sol Kogen acting as supervisor. The concurrent construction of this project with Carl Street allowed for Kogen to acquire materials that could be used on both.

²³ Frank Miller. "Edgar" Date Unknown. Copy given to Larry Zgoda by Frank Miller

²⁴ Sheldon Mix. "Burton Place the Handmade Street," *Chicago Magazine*, Spring 1966, p 37.

²⁵ Douglas Hardy, "Master of Mediums" *Chicago Daily News*, 1930.

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Although similar in concept, the Wells Street Studios are often considered more “planned” and better crafted than those on Carl Street. However the advantage at Carl Street was that since it was for Kogen himself and not a paying client, Miller was not forced to alter his artistic vision to appeal to the client’s taste. Kogen respected Miller’s work and added his own embellishments only after Miller had left the partnership. While Miller was working on the studios, Kogen would spend his day securing small loans for renovations and prowl around the junkyards and shops on Maxwell Street looking for bargains in used materials.

The remodeling of older structures into artists’ studios initiated at the Carl Street Studios by Sol Kogen and Edgar Miller was well written about in the 1940s and beyond. Articles first appeared in the local press that extolled the way dilapidated old buildings were given a new life. Later articles dwelled on the artists’ colony that was established within these walls. The first article appeared as early as 1930 in the *Western Architect*, entitled “The Kogen-Miller Studios” by Nicholas Matsoukos, who called the Carl Street Studios and the Wells Street Studios the “Kogen-Miller Colony”. The author noted the vertical arrangement of rooms with large studio spaces of two or more stories, high windows in brilliant hues, and the use of salvaged building material in “the midst of an art colony only a few yards away from the slums!”²⁶ In 1934 the *Chicago Daily Tribune* featured interior photos of Edgar Miller’s work at the Carl Street Studios in an article entitled, “Old Apartment House Answers to Modernizing.”²⁷ The artists’ colony concept was repeated throughout the 1940s when the *Chicago Daily News* noted the “Old Drabness Gone in This Neighborhood” as 161 W. Burton was transformed.²⁸ The *Chicago Tribune* listed the artists who lived on Burton Place and said, “Artist Colony forms one big Happy Family.”²⁹ Throughout the 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s, authors have looked again and again at the remarkable work done at the Carl Street Studios by Kogen and Miller, and others, and praised its hand-crafted artistry. The Carl Street Studios remains the most important building in the Burton Place historic District for its embodiment of the spatial principals of artists’ studios combined with the application of artist-designed and made ornamental doors, windows, fireplaces, railings, pavement, and myriad other surfaces.

²⁶ Matsoukos, Nicholas. “The Kogen-Miller Studios” *Western Architect*. Volume 39 #12, December 1930.

²⁷ Bargelt, Louise. “Old Apartment House Answers to Modernizing,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* April 29, 1934.

²⁸ Shepard, Seth. “Old Drabness Gone in This Neighborhood,” *Daily News*, November 30, 1940.

²⁹ Ford, Ann. “Artist Colony Forms One Big Happy Family,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 15, 1942.

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But the contribution of the studios reached well beyond its own walls as other artist and designers followed the lead of Kogen and Miller and began applying the same principles to other structures on the street.

RENOVATION OF OTHER STRUCTURES ON BURTON PLACE

The second Kogen project on Burton Place was the former two-story, 1880s two-flat at 151 W. Burton, purchased by William G. Giuliani, a retired baritone with the Metropolitan Opera, and his wife, Mae, in 1930. With Kogen hired as an advisor, they turned the converted rooming house into artists' studios similar in feel to the Carl Street Studio complex next door. Permits issued for repairs and alterations in 1934 and 1935 indicate a front, brick addition. As at Carl Street Studios, the original façade was removed and a new façade built of salvaged common brick, up to the front property line. Masonry and other materials interrupt the surface, creating a rough, handmade quality to the structure. The entrance is squared off and setback slightly from the sweeping, curved windows that dominate the façade. The upper floors have wide bands of clear glass within thin metal muntins, and the first floor has narrow vertical panes of textured and stained glass. The windows were created with glass salvaged from the Swift Bridge at the World's Fair, and the colorful tile floors on the interior are composed of recycled tile.³⁰

Shortly after the completion of 151, the owner of 160 W. Burton, Archie H. Siegel, undertook work on his own 1880s brick flat building. There is an alteration permit issued in 1938 at which time the front of the building was probably rebuilt up to the front lot line and the interior was divided into studio apartments. The exact nature of Sol Kogen's involvement with the property hasn't been verified, but his name appears as owner of this property in title transactions from 1945. It remained in the ownership of his wife, Florence after Sol's death in 1957. Siegel was an attorney who transferred ownership to a 160 W. Burton Place Building Corporation in 1943. The entire façade is now painted gray and shows off the saw-tooth brick cornice and large rectangular two-story windows found on other Kogen projects. The façade is adorned with bands of black and white

³⁰ Ann Ford. "Artist Colony forms one big Happy Family" *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 15, 1942.

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mosaic tiles surrounding terra-cotta relief sculptures which are re-casts of Miller's work done without his approval.

Kogen's work on West Burton attracted other urban pioneers to undertake renovation projects on the street, at 161 and at 143. These projects were seen as the beginning of the gentrification of the Old Town neighborhood. The new owners along the street formed a group, calling themselves the West Burton Place Improvement Association. A 1940 *Chicago Daily News* article reported changes along the street: "nine out of the thirteen old Victorian type houses have been rebuilt and remodeled into modern livable apartments. Instead of giving in to the plague of tumble-down old flats and cheap rooming houses, the owners have sunk good money into properties with this hope that modernization would bring a fair return to them, give an attractive home to people of average means, and preserve a dying neighborhood."³¹ The Association came to sponsor an annual Art Fair and a variety of neighborhood improvement projects.

The owner of 161, Norman E. Johnson, obtained a permit for alterations to his 1879 brick structure in 1940, and from the exterior, it bears strong resemblance to Kogen's project at 151. The sweeping curve and inset front entry echo that of 151, but here the window is executed in glass block. The four-unit studio building boasts the typical features that are characteristic of the street – two-story windows reflecting the open, two-story interior spaces, colorful tile on steps, sills, and countertops, and wood-burning fireplaces in stucco hearths. The inclusion of clinkers on the street façade gives the residences an undulating rhythm. The west façade against the alley is exposed and reveals the common brick sidewall of the original structure, with its new decorative window openings, an enclosed terrace, and a curving back porch structure with narrow vertical openings. Although attempts have been made to link the design to Andrew Rebori, no documentation has yet been found. Still the sweeping, curved glass block of 161 bears a strong resemblance to Rebori's Fisher Apartments at 1209 N. State, designed in conjunction with Edgar Miller in 1936. An even closer match is to Rebori's own home at 1328 N. State Street designed in 1937, where the curved corner bays dominate the facades.

³¹ Seth Shepard. "Old Drabness Gone in This Neighborhood," *Chicago Daily News*, November 1940.

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The other renovation on the street from 1940 is the Theophil Studios at 143, the original 1892 flat building being perhaps the largest rooming/boarding house on the street in the 1930s. Its redesign by architect Frank Lapasso on its prominent corner location distinctively marks the block as something quite different than other historic Old Town streets. The flat front Burton Place façade is clad in white stucco and red face brick. Its simplified, asymmetrical arrangement of window openings as geometry suggests the arrival of the International Style to the neighborhood, making it stand quite apart from the earlier, folksier work of Edgar Miller. The casement stained glass windows are glazed with Miller-inspired chevron elements as well as several porthole windows that indicate an interior stairwell. There are several original Edgar Miller works and at least one re-cast work installed on the façade near the Burton Place entrance – a green glazed terra cotta panel depicting a horse surround by stylized vegetation, a caryatid torso identical to two at Carl Street Studios, a cast relief panel of a sinewy gazelle, and a figure looking over its shoulder holding a bunch of grapes.

Frank Lapasso received a B.S. in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1932. He is listed as a member of the Illinois Society of Architects in its 1938-39 *Handbook for Architects and Builders*,³² and worked as Frank J. Lapasso & Associates, an architectural and engineering firm in the 1960s. Lapasso appears to have been most prolific in the post-World War II years. Projects during that period include a large residential development of fifty single-family homes in Summit (1947), three “luxury motels” on the south side of Chicago (1956), and the Plainfield Church (1969). The motel designs were apparently quite Moderne in styling, one, the Thunderbird, being described with wing-like roofs, and the other, the Breakers, having a zig-zag shape.

A group of commercial artists led by Carl Peter Koch and Clive Rickabaugh purchased the two rooming houses and three coach houses at 152, 154, and 156 W. Burton Place in 1937. The two properties have experienced moderate changes compared to the total transformation of the earlier renovations. Vestiges of the original brick façade are visible at 156 in the patchwork of face and common brick. And although the second and third floor windows clearly express a modern idiom, the first floor retains the proportion of the building’s original nineteenth-century windows. At 152, the massing with hexagonal bay

³² *Handbook for Architects and Builders, 1938-39*, (published under the auspices of the Illinois Society of Architects), page 61

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identifies this as a nineteenth-century residential structure, while the highly simplified façade in new face brick shows its modernity.

Clive Rickabaugh first came to Chicago in 1929 to attend the Art Institute of Chicago. Rickabaugh began his artistic career working as a scenic designer for theatrical productions in the Chicago area. In the 1930s, he was president of Local 350, United Scenic Artists Union and art director for the Works Progress Administration Theater. Rickabaugh also designed several exhibit backgrounds for the Century of Progress Exposition in 1933-34. Rickabaugh continued working in theater and set design through the 1940s and 1950s, creating backdrops for the Lyric Opera and several theaters. From 1950 to 1955, Rickabaugh served as art director for ABC-TV Chicago. In 1949, in partnership with attorney, L.S. Adler, he designed and built thirteen townhouses on Hudson Street in Chicago. A long-time resident of W. Burton Place, Rickabaugh founded the West Burton Place Art Fair in 1963. Rickabaugh died in his studio at 152 W. Burton Place in December 1973. He was 67 years old.³³

Less is known about Rickabaugh's real estate partner Karl Peter Koch. Koch was a commercial artist specializing in package design. He worked for the Bielefeld Studios in Chicago, and lived at 156 W. Burton Place until his death in 1955 at the age of 56.³⁴

On the rear of the lots on the north side of Burton Place there are five coach houses that have also been remodeled. The one behind 160 was part of the Kogen project. There are others behind 156, 154, and 152. Behind 158 W. is a newer remodeling from 1966. The last structure on the block to fall under the artist-craftsman influence, it is called the Sun House. The small 18 x 24 foot structure occupies the entire rear of the lot and was designed by architect Ron Dirsmith and contractor Charley Moelter as a rental property.³⁵ The entrance is through a wide gangway between 160 and the front structure at 158. Visible on the north (alley) elevation are large, curvilinear glass cutlets in varied hues, embedded and molded into the façade, giving the appearance of the side of a cliff. At night they glow with color. On the interior they are part of a series of art glass windows tracing man's evolution by Bob White, a Chicago artist.

³³ "Chicago Artist Dies in Studio." *Chicago Tribune*, December 28, 1973. Page 21

³⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, June 7, 1955, page B12

³⁵ Sheldon Mix, "Burton Place the Handmade Street" *Chicago Magazine*, Spring, 1966, p 36.

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RESIDUAL VICTORIAN CHARM

Although widely regarded as drab and dilapidated in the 1930s, to a preservation eye today, the five remaining urban town homes and flat buildings on Burton Place are significant historic structures. Buildings of this type and condition are the stars of other historic districts in the city, but when seen here, provide the background for understanding from where the Kogen-Miller creativity sprung. 125-year-old historic homes are juxtaposed with 70-year-old historic homes that achieved their architectural significance by completely transforming homes just like the five that now survive. As preservationists we benefit from the passage of time that allows us to recognize the artistic accomplishment of these 1930s remodelings.

All five of the remaining Victorian-era homes are three-story masonry structures, tall and narrow with flat roofs characteristic of urban town homes in Chicago from the late 19th century. One, the red brick Italianate style structure from 1881 at 147 W. Burton Place is a single-family residence that was singled out (“orange-rated”) for its architectural distinction in the *Chicago Historic Resources Survey*.³⁶ It retains its original cornice with distinctive brackets. The other four from this period are flat buildings that have each been converted into three-unit condominiums. One of these, the flat-fronted, red brick 158 W. Burton Place dating from the early 1880s displays modest Italianate features, notably in the windows. On the same side of the street, 150, has the characteristic look of a Chicago graystone with rusticated limestone facing and a hexagonal front window bay. Built in 1889, this otherwise handsome home has had its cornice boxed-in. The other two structures have Classical Revival detailing and include 159 W. Burton Place built in 1891, and 145 built in 1896. Each has a distinctive stone base and brick on the upper two floors.

³⁶ *Chicago Historic Resources Survey: An Inventory of Architecturally and Historically Significant Structures* Commission on Chicago Landmarks and the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 1996

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CONCLUSION

The West Burton Place Historic District is a unique physical environment reflective of an artists' culture in the 1930s that valued old materials but took them and transformed them in new and amazingly creative ways. Although the nineteenth-century buildings they used were evocative of their own historic style and period, they became the core of an aesthetic expression that has gained architectural significance in its own right. The owners, artists, architects and tradesmen who worked so diligently through the lean years of the Great Depression exercised a design sensibility and technical skills that continue to be valued through the years. Not only were individual works of great beauty created on Burton Place itself, but the street was the inspiration for restoration of older structures on many other surrounding streets. Kogen and Miller have been credited by many for having sparked the preservation movement that has rippled throughout the entire Old Town community.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The district includes all structures on the north and south sides of West Burton Place between LaSalle Street on the east and the north/south alley east of Wells Street on the west. The properties on both sides of West Burton Street extend to alleys in the rear that run east and west.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The street contains a compact concentration of artists' studios from the 1930s. There are other individual structures of similar significance but they are on scattered sites several blocks from this concentration.

UTM's

16 447372E
4639702N

16 447448E
4639702N

16 447402E
4639639N

16 447482E
4639640N

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West Burton Place Historic District*

PHOTOGRAPH LIST

Photos by: Victoria Granacki, January & July 2007

- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD001.tif—Burton Place, looking west
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD002.tif—143-145 W. Burton Place, front (north) facades
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD003.tif—145 W. Burton Place, front (north) façade
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD004.tif—147 W. Burton Place, front (north) facade
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD005.tif—151 W. Burton Place, front (north) facade
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD006.tif—Carl Street Studios, 155 W. Burton Place, looking southeast
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD007.tif—Carl Street Studios, 155 W. Burton Place, east courtyard, looking north
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD008.tif—Carl Street Studios, 155 W. Burton Place, gate to west courtyard
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD009.tif—Carl Street Studios, 155 W. Burton Place, west courtyard, looking south
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD010.tif—159 W. Burton Place, front (north) façade
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD011.tif—161 W. Burton Place, front (north) and west facades, looking southeast
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD012.tif—150 W. Burton Place, front (south) façade
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD013.tif—152-156 W. Burton Place, front (south) facades
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD014.tif—152-156 W. Burton Place, front courtyard, looking north
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD015.tif—152 W. Burton Place, front (south) façade
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD016.tif—154 W. Burton Place, coach house entry
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD017.tif—160 W. Burton Place, front (south) façade
- IL_CookCounty_BurtonPlaceHD018.tif—North side of Burton place, looking west



Street number 156
Direction W
Street Burton
Historic Name
Original Date c. 1880
Date of Alterations c. 1935-1940
Current Style International Style

Rating
Alt Architect
Alt Owner

PHOTOID
ImageID



Street number 156 (rear)
Direction W
Street Burton
Historic Name
Original Date
Date of Alterations c. 1935
Current Style No Style [Coach House]

Rating
Alt Architect
Alt Owner

PHOTOID
ImageID



Street number 158
Direction W
Street Burton
Historic Name
Original Date c. 1880
Date of Alterations
Current Style Italianate

Rating
Alt Architect
Alt Owner

PHOTOID
ImageID



Street number 158 (rear)
Direction W
Street Burton
Historic Name
Original Date
Date of Alterations c. 1940
Current Style Contemporary

Rating
Alt Architect
Alt Owner

PHOTOID
ImageID



Street number 159
Direction W
Street Burton
Historic Name
Original Date 1891
Date of Alterations
Current Style Classical Revival

Rating
Alt Architect
Alt Owner

PHOTOID
ImageID



Street number 160
Direction W
Street Burton
Historic Name
Original Date 1886
Date of Alterations 1938
Current Style International Style

Rating
Alt Architect
Alt Owner

PHOTOID
ImageID

Street number

160 (rear)

Rating

Direction

W

Alt Architect

Street

Burton

Alt Owner

Historic Name

Original Date

PHOTOID

Date of Alterations

ImageID

Current Style

No Style



Street number

161

Rating

Direction

W

Alt Architect

Street

Burton

Alt Owner

Historic Name

Original Date

1879

PHOTOID

Date of Alterations

1940

ImageID

Current Style

Art Moderne



Street number
Direction
Street
Historic Name
Original Date
Date of Alterations
Current Style

Rating
Alt Architect
Alt Owner

PHOTOID
ImageID



Street number
Direction
Street
Historic Name
Original Date
Date of Alterations
Current Style

Rating
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Historic Name
Original Date
Date of Alterations
Current Style

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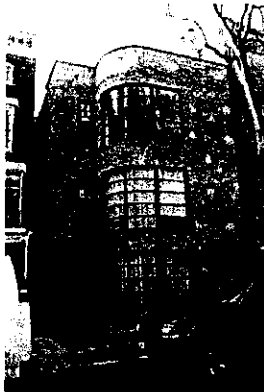
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Current Style

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Alt Owner

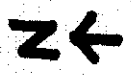
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Current Style

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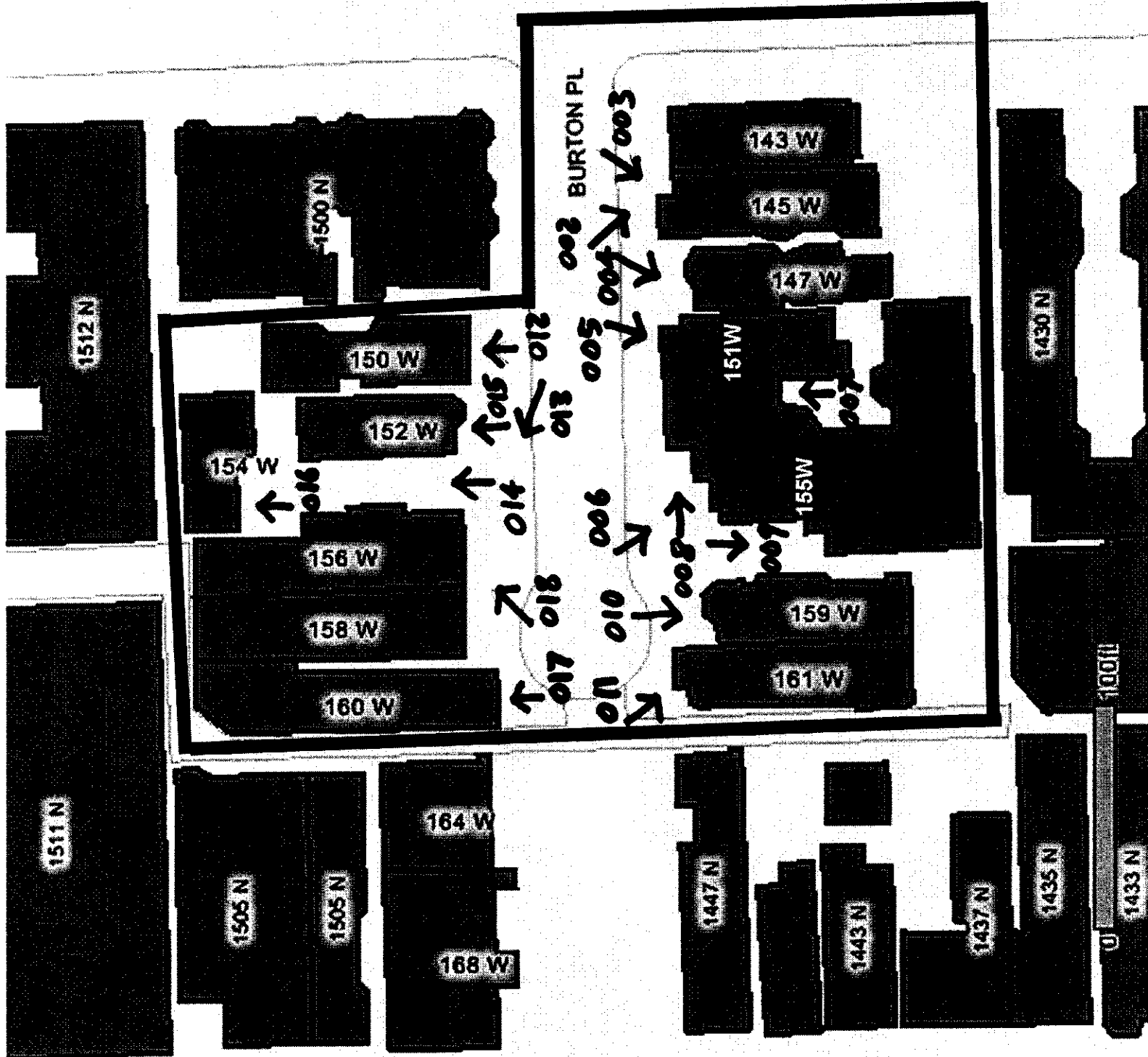
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BURTON PL



ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Lumber Exchange Building and Tower Addition,
11 S. LaSalle,
Chicago, 07001238,
LISTED, 12/06/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
West Burton Place Historic District,
143-161 W. Burton Pl,
Chicago, 07001239,
LISTED, 12/06/07

IOWA, SCOTT COUNTY,
Marycrest College Historic District,
Portions of 1500 and 1600 blks of W. 12th St., Davenport, 04000341, ADDITIONAL
DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 12/05/07

KENTUCKY, JEFFERSON COUNTY,
Stewart's Dry Goods Company Building,
501 S. 4th St.,
Louisville, 82002725,
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 12/05/07

MASSACHUSETTS, BRISTOL COUNTY,
Spring Brook Cemetery,
Spring St,
Mansfield, 07001240,
LISTED, 12/06/07

MASSACHUSETTS, MIDDLESEX COUNTY,
Revere Beach Parkway-Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston, Revere Beach Pkwy,
Chelsea, 07001241, LISTED, 12/06/07 (Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston MPS)

MINNESOTA, DODGE COUNTY,
Kasson Public School,
101 3rd Ave. NW,
Kasson, 07001242,
LISTED, 12/06/07

MISSOURI, JACKSON COUNTY,
18th and Vine Historic District,
Roughly bounded by 18th St., Woodland Ave., 19th St. and The Paseo, Kansas City, 84004142,
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 12/05/07 (18th and Vine Area of Kansas City
MPS)

MONTANA, MUSSELSHELL COUNTY,
Roundup Central School,
600 1st St. W,
Roundup, 07001243,
LISTED, 12/06/07